

**Post-Event Summary Report
2005 White House Conference on Aging
Juneau, Alaska Community Forum**

Name of Event: "The Future of Aging in Alaska" Juneau Community Forum

Date of Event: Friday, February 25th, 2005, 1 to 4 pm

Location of Event: Juneau Senior Center in Juneau, Alaska

Number of Persons Attending: 58

Sponsoring Organizations: Alaska Commission on Aging and Juneau Commission on Aging

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Event Format: Participants discussed four overall issues in small groups (tables), then reported their top recommendations to the full group. (Note: there were a total of 11 tables, numbered 1 through 9, 11, and 15.)

Priority Issue #1: Health and Long-Term Care

Barrier #1: *The current health care system is too costly, inconsistently available, and focuses too little on prevention.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #1:

Offer universal health care for seniors and everyone. Long-term care should be covered as well. (Table 4)

Have a national safety net with a minimum care standard. (Table 5)

Have a universal health care system for all ages, all U.S. people, with better regulation and oversight of pharmaceutical companies – including price controls. (Table 6)

Create a not-for-profit health care system for those who cannot pay, with annual physicals and a focus on prevention and wellness. (Table 7)

Lower costs for health care in general, especially for transportation and long-term care. (Table 8)

Place a ceiling on doctors' fees – seniors can't afford them – and on prescription drug costs too. (Table 9)

Provide affordable long-term care for everyone, with special consideration for stay-at-home care, which enhances dignity for elders.
(Table 15)

Barrier #2: *Prevalence of lifestyle-based diseases and conditions.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #2:

Provide continued education and prevention activities such as health fairs. (Table 2)

Provide preventive care, early education, wellness clinics. (Table 3)

Encourage personal responsibility for healthy choices. (Table 5)

Barrier #3: *Too little support for consumer-based, home-based long-term care.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #3:

Individuals and families should control health care decisions. Should be able to keep people at home by using home health care, etc. (Table 1)

Provide affordable long-term care for everyone, with special consideration for stay-at-home care, which enhances dignity for elders. (Table 15)

Barrier #4: *Difficulty in accessing information about available (health and long-term care) services.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #4:

Simplify access to information about available [health and long-term care] services through use of technology. (Table 11)

Priority Issue #2: Financial Security

Barrier #1: *Uncertainty about the future of Social Security.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #1:

We want Social Security with no diminished benefits. We want good, concrete information before deciding on changes. Maintain Social Security! (Table 1)

Privatization is a possible solution for Social Security. (Table 2)

Leave Social Security alone! (Table 5)

Do not change Social Security except to increase the \$90,000 salary cap for Social Security deductions. (Table 6)

End the limit on income subject to Social Security tax. When government borrows from Social Security, pay it back. Don't privatize Social Security. (Table 8)

Politicians, keep your fingers out of Social Security. Take care of Americans first. (Table 9)

Protect Social Security. Privatization only exacerbates the problem. Strengthen, don't destroy. (Table 11)

Barrier #2: *Consumers lacking information, education and vehicles for maximizing retirement savings.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #2:

Save money, don't borrow it. Government and individuals alike should demonstrate fiscal responsibility. (Table 2)

Bring financial education into schools and classes early. (Table 3)

People need to learn what services are available to help them financially – such as money management education. (Table 7)

Encourage younger people to start saving for the future. (Table 9)

Provide tax incentives for retirement vehicles such as IRAs and 401(K)s. Provide early education! (Table 11)

Offer education for investing early in life. Increase financial literacy. Show special concern for people (such as fishermen) who don't pay into a retirement system. Allow people to invest in their own retirement and long-term care through the (Alaska) Permanent Fund Dividend.

Barrier #3: *Difficulties in finding employment for those seniors who need or want to continue working.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #3:

Make employment opportunities available to all seniors. Do not tie older worker programs to income levels. (Table 4)

Priority Issue #3: Community Resources

Barrier #1: *Communities lacking appropriate facilities, providers, and/or services.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #1:

Have hospitals and nursing homes appropriate to the communities served. Look at an array of long-term care options – assisted living homes, in-home care, etc. (Table 1)

Make essential health care and support services available as close to the consumer as possible. (Table 4)

Create a village or two in Alaska where people move at retirement. It would have services, entertainment, etc. People would move to a new part of the village as their care needs increase. (Table 7)

Train medical personnel in villages so people won't have to leave the villages. Provide the same quality of care statewide. (Table 9)

Provide assistance to all seniors before they need hospitalization or nursing home care. Provide cross-cultural training for both family and paid caregivers and medical personnel. (Table 15)

Barrier #2: *Too few young people entering and remaining in health care and personal care services professions.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #2:

Offer incentives (such as loan repayment or forgiveness, housing support, etc.) for young people to enter health care professions. Promote these professions as valid, important, and respected. (Table 1)

Provide incentives for students [going into professions such as health care that serve seniors].
Reimburse or write off student loans if they stay in state. (Table 2)

Provide recognition, awards, a living wage for service workers. (Table 3)

Raise pay and hours for personal care attendants, and drop costs of training. (Table 15)

Barrier #3: Consumer difficulty in finding information about community services.

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #3:

Have an easily available listing of available community services. (Table 1)

Initiate best practices. Inform consumers of what they should expect in services. (Table 3)

Have more coordination among agencies. (Table 5)

Barrier #4: Homebound seniors in need of a variety of services.

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #4:

Offer mental health counselors in-home for seniors. (Table 2)

Provide basic chore and respite services for seniors. (Table 3)

Identify the homebound who are living alone, and find a way to connect them with the services they need. (Table 6)

Barrier #5: Mobility restrictions on seniors due to inadequate transportation options and/or inaccessible buildings.

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #5:

Improve transportation, especially at night. Have better bus systems, senior vans, taxi service, delivery of Meals on Wheels, other transportation. (Table 8)

Local transit services need to place more priority on residents than on tourists. (Table 15)

...Prioritize elder accessibility statewide. (Table 15)

Barrier #6: Not enough support for caregivers.

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #6:

Provide more recognition for caregivers. (Table 5)

In Alaska many family caregivers need additional resources for support, especially when urban caregivers are responsible for rural family members. (Table 11)

Priority Issue #4: Social Well-being and Employment

Barrier #1: *Seniors feeling marginalized and separated from other generations, not included in the life of the community.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #1:

Increase awareness that all elders want to be included, invited, noticed, seen and heard. (Table 1)

Continue support for Foster Grandparents, National Senior Service Corps, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, etc. (Table 2)

Put together an inter-generational recreational community center. Bring back the sense of community. (Table 3)

The Commission on Aging should create an advertisement: "Have you lost a game of cribbage to a senior lately?" (Table 5)

We need more interaction with youth so seniors can help them. (Table 8)

Show love and kindness to one another, young and old alike. (Now that we're "civilized," we don't do anything for nothing.) (Table 9)

Promote social well-being through intergenerational activities such as programs through a university or other organizations. (Table 11)

Adopt a grandparent at the Pioneer Home, Assisted Living, or homebound seniors with no local family. This could be part of classes or after-school activities for high schoolers. (Table 15)

Barrier #2: *Seniors lacking mental and physical challenges and opportunities for social exchange.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #2:

Encourage the provision of age-appropriate activities for seniors that encourage lifelong learning, socialization and meaningful participation. (Table 4)

Find ways to encourage physical activity. Caregivers need respite care so they can exercise. Health clubs should offer special rates for seniors and caregivers. There should be a community hang-out area with no special program. (Table 6)

Incorporate healthy lifestyle classes and groups – exercise, dance, etc. (Table 15)

Barrier #3: *Difficulty obtaining employment for seniors.*

Proposed Solution(s) for Barrier #3:

Consider working longer or getting re-educated for new jobs. Deal with age discrimination early, consistently, and firmly. (Table 7)

Provide job training for seniors (MASST program, etc.). But train seniors for high-paying jobs, not low-paying jobs. Encourage seniors to apply for high-paying jobs. We need more senior advocates. (Table 8)